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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 000565

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SUBJECT:QPOLITICS 2006: THE YEAR OF "ANYTHING CAN  
HAPPEN!"

REF: A) DAKAR 0316; B) 05 DAKAR 2311

CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROY L. WHITAKER, FOR  
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

#### SUMMARY

1. (C) Senegalese predict "anything can happen" in the run-up to parliamentary and presidential elections. Some even believe the February 2007 election date may be reset for constitutional, logistic or other reasons. President Wade may establish a vice-presidency and Senate -- new senior jobs to offer disgruntled loyalists or potential allies. Neither Wade nor ex-PM Seck seem to have figured out an advantageous way to resolve their dispute, and Seck is hearing conflicting advice on whether to work with Wade or challenge him. The opposition remains fractured, leaderless and unimaginative. Some light-heavyweight political and religious leaders want to create a "third force." END SUMMARY.

#### THE POLITICS OF MALLEABLE INSTITUTIONS

2. (C) Wade critics complain that he has "personalized politics ... and places his own political interests above republican institutions." Be that as it may, he does like to keep opponents off-balance and his majority in parliament enables him to do so. He called for postponing National Assembly elections by a year to coincide with scheduled 2007 presidential election. Yet, as the president of the national election commission (CENA) has told the Charge, Wade has not obtained parliamentary approval to do so, leaving doubt about his intentions. The most cynical Wade haters think that, having persuaded people he has authority to extend Parliament's mandate, Wade may seize any pretext that arises (a national crisis of some sort, the financial burden of an election, etc.) to extend his own.

3. (C) Feeding public suspicion is the sorry state of preparations for the new electoral system. 2.4 million potential voters have registered to date, with slightly more women than men. The new deadline for registering is May 31. While the CENA seems relatively optimistic, opposition leaders predict it will soon be logistically impossible to register all voters before the campaign. There are complaints in the provinces of inadequate staff, inefficient location of registration offices, electricity brown-outs in peak hours, and an alleged tendency to provide more facilities to pro-Wade areas. If voters are not registered in time, critics fear, there would be three bad options: proceed although the voters rolls may not fairly represent all voters; revert to the old electoral system with all the confusion that would bring; or, postpone elections.

4. (C) We have heard speculation for months that Wade would recreate a Senate to provide him senior-level

patronage jobs to parcel out, either to long-term PDS loyalists or to opposition leaders willing to turn their coats. A Vice-Presidency offers an even more tantalizing set of options: Wade could name his VP and thereby anoint a successor; he could break the opposition's back by offering the job to its co-leader, Moustapha Niasse; or he could even design it as a bucket-of-warm-spit position with which to lure Seck's campaign support but in which to exile Seck later. PM Macky Sall recently pressed the Charge with questions about how the U.S. vice-presidency and Senate are set up and function.

#### THE PRIME MINISTER'S STRAYING GOATS

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15. (C) Macky Sall declared February 26 in Matam that the PDS is an enclosure of goats (un enclos de chevres), and that you are either in the goat-pen or outside it. Sall is traveling to provincial cities to work with PDS local leaders on selecting parliamentary candidates. In numerous instances, there is clearly a need to knock heads and enforce discipline, but we are hearing that Sall lacks the forcefulness or clout to do so effectively. He has no real power to sanction the uncooperative; Seck's sympathizers in the party resent him; and unless and until the new Senate is created, he has nothing to offer longtime Wade loyalists or ex-Socialist turncoats and local clans who are competing for the limited available spoils. Time and again, we hear that only Wade keeps the PDS from disintegrating into personality-centered and self-interested factions with nothing in common save the search for power.

#### THE OPPOSITION'S FRENZIED TORPOR

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16. (C) The opposition lacks a leader to overcome its lack of common goals or organizational inefficiency. While loud and furious about Wade's alleged electoral manipulations and contempt for republican institutions, the opposition often appears immobile. Most believe Wade will drop the current two-round election for a "first-past-the-post" single round, for example, but each opposition party, and a rebel Socialist faction, is intent on running a candidate for president. The key relationship in the opposition is between the Socialists and Moustapha Niasse and there has been talk of one becoming president and the other Prime Minister if they win. Yet they have not shaken hands on the deal. Nor have the ex-Marxist Democratic League and PIT been fully integrated.

#### A THIRD FORCE

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17. (C) Two days after release from prison (Ref A), Idrissa Seck had dinner with those who had visited him in prison. In addition to the Lebanese-Senegalese ecologist party leader Ali Haydar and former Wade confidant Jean Paul Diaz, his guests were the young political activist Talla Sylla and Serigne Mamoune Niasse, head of a small political party and a leading marabout in the Kaolack branch of the Tidjane Brotherhood. Sylla and Niasse offered Seck similar advice.

18. (C) Sylla told us he urged Seck to challenge Wade now for the presidency, and to circumvent the hapless opposition's unappealing bosses with a new alliance. Seck's de facto prime ministerial running mate would be Mamadou Lamine Loum, who headed the last Socialist government in 1998-2000 (Ref B). In the parliamentary election, Sylla would head the new alliance's candidate list.

19. (C) In a later conversation, Mamoune Niasse told us he wants to form a "third pole" alternative to the PDS and opposition. This new force would at first work as a

national mediator to "redress" the country's problems. If this did not succeed, though, then the third force would attempt to win the presidency and parliament. Niasse's chief of protocol was earlier chief of protocol to Prime Ministers Seck and Loum.

COMMENT

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¶10. (SBU) Wade's friends and hangers-on seem rather amused that he has successfully created so much confusion in the ranks of the opposition. His critics are exasperated, though, and the Senegalese-in-the-street is puzzled by what one professor and labor leader described to us as "unprecedented political and institutional uncertainty and instability."

¶11. (C) We cannot really judge if the current incertitude is unprecedented, but we are intrigued by a related argument. This is that politics in Senegal used to be linear, with events proceeding in logical and predictable patterns. Wade, however, has supposedly changed the way politics works, with emphasis on personal rather than institutional leadership; greater identification of the ruling party with the state; and a greater willingness to adapt rules, including electoral law or the penal code, to exigencies identified or defined by the President.

¶12. (C) As we have noted before, the President's April 4 Independence Day speech will give him the opportunity to clarify the electoral calendar. He may even do so before then. There will still be considerable political flux, however, as internal PDS factions battle it out; ex-PM Seck decides to challenge Wade, stay on the sidelines or run for Parliament; the opposition sinks deeper or emerges from its muddle; and young leaders dissatisfied with both Wade and the opposition seek ways to create a third political force.  
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